



## Case Study

### Covisia Solutions - Virtualization

*"Virtualization provides a much leaner and more efficient computer network while allowing end-users to access applications the same way they always have."*

Paddy Harrington, Vice President of Technology, Covisia Solutions

#### THE CHALLENGE

As Aegis Associates and DeVA Systems merged companies to form Covisia Solutions, the new entity needed to address a major challenge: how to create a new computer network infrastructure. Covisia also needed to determine how to merge the financial and customer relationship management software packages used by the two former businesses.

Aegis had previously deployed a Windows Server 2003 network using Sales Logix CRM software to manage customer relationships along with MAS 90 accounting software to manage financial information. DeVA, had also deployed a Windows 2003 network but was using a different version of Sales Logix and had managed financials using QuickBooks.

"The network infrastructure of both companies needed some improvements, and we had some aging hardware systems," said Covisia Solutions Vice President of Technology Paddy Harrington. "So we felt the merger offered a good opportunity to evolve to a new network infrastructure. We essentially had two different systems to integrate."

#### THE SOLUTION

Because Covisia Solutions is a technology provider and often supports CRM and financial packages for customers, the company decided it could handle the entire project internally. "Our technology expertise gave us an advantage when it came to merging IT systems," Harrington said. "But businesses outside the technology sector would most likely need the help of an outside firm to merge multiple networks. Depending on the nature of the applications, they might also need additional third parties when it comes to merging applications."

The "first step was to convert the entire company to the MAS 90 financial management application. "Converting DeVA's QuickBooks data over to MAS 90 was an easy step," Harrington said. "We took this step first because working company financials are critical to managing the company."

When it came to designing the new network infrastructure, Covisia Solutions took a whole new approach by creating a network infrastructure based on server virtualization. "This was our last step in the process," Harrington said. "We converted all of the users at the same time on a Friday at 5pm so that by the following Monday, everyone was able to use their applications in normal fashion."

#### Key Benefits - Covisia Solutions Virtualization Infrastructure Deployment

- Reduced capital expenditures and ongoing costs for hardware by lowering the number of required servers from 18 to 6 with an estimated savings of \$66,000.
- Improved the company's ability to restore its network within minutes in the event of a disaster.
- Helped seamlessly merge two company computer networks into one, with no downtime.
- Expected ROI in the first year to be 35%.

To create the virtual infrastructure, Covisia deployed the Citrix XenServer platform on HP servers running the Windows 2003 operating system. Covisia also deployed new Microsoft Exchange and SQL servers while adding Citrix NetScaler for virtual-private-network users and remote-access users.

NetScaler also offered server load balancing, which assists with the disaster recovery process. As part of the new network design, Covisia deployed a storage area network (SAN) using a solution from LeftHand Networks.

## THE BENEFITS

Before deciding on the virtual server infrastructure, it appeared that Covisia would need as many as 18 servers to cover all of the application requirements of the new company. But because of the capabilities of virtualization technology, Covisia reduced the number of physical servers down to 6, which includes the new SAN server components that did not exist previously on either network.

"Virtualization allowed us to create a much smaller hardware footprint, which not only reduced the initial hardware cost but also reduces ongoing power and cooling costs," Harrington said. "Having fewer physical servers also means we spend less time on general server maintenance, and if we need to roll-out a new server, we don't have to provision a new physical box – we just use our existing virtual infrastructure to deploy a new server within minutes."

Virtualization has also given Covisia a more reliable high-availability solution. "By going virtual, we can store all of our data on the SAN, which itself is redundant," Harrington said. "And we now have an operating system running across six servers. If we lose any one physical server, we can immediately switch a file or an Exchange server to another server and be down for only a few minutes."

Another reason that Covisia transitioned to a virtualization infrastructure was to provide a higher level of fault tolerance in case of a total environment or building failure. The redundant SAN gave Covisia the ability to install another SAN at a co-location to which the company replicates all of its data and applications. "We can copy the entire infrastructure and data and replicate to the off-site location," Harrington said. "In the event of a serious failure at our offices, we can power-up the entire system via the co-location SAN."

## IN SUMMARY

"We simply had no choice but to merge the operations of the two companies given our situation," Harrington said. We had a lot of differences, but keeping separate networks would have been impractical since the two former companies essentially provided the same type of services to customers."

Harrington added that once a company decides to merge two networks, it's much easier to evolve into a new infrastructure. "If you haven't already migrated to a virtual infrastructure, it's the ideal time to undertake the task. We significantly cut down the amount of power and cooling we use, and we have fewer networking components to manage.

With the successful conclusion of this project, Covisia Solutions has now created a blueprint for how to merge the technology systems of two small businesses. "By using virtualization and consolidated storage, the technology-merging process flows much more smoothly," Harrington said. It provides for a much leaner and more efficient computer network while allowing end-users to access applications the same way they always have."

*"One of the side benefits of Citrix Virtualization technology is the virtual desktop access to applications over the LAN. Covisia had many older laptops and desktops that were having problems running applications locally. We just configured the clients to access applications virtually to the Citrix farm, and it solved all the local desktop problems immediately. It actually improved local desktop performance tremendously and allowed us to extend the life of those machines. This alone saved us an estimated \$20,000 in PC replacements."*

Bill Fistori, CEO of Covisia Solutions

